

Experience in cavities

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The great paradox in Dentistry is that, reduced to the sublime, if not to the absurd, the profession may well be challenged by the enquiry.. why so many specialisations for so small a cavity? Look to an Orthodontist for part of the answer.. Robert Murray Ricketts (1920-2003) emphasised the importance of the mouth; in general health, in communication, in nutrition, in social standing, in sex, in speech, in expressing emotion.

The mouth is second only to the eyes in terms of the focus of attention of an onlooker. No wonder that the World Web of Science records increasing numbers of research papers on Dentistry and related topics.

A study published in 2012 recording the trends in this esoteric section of science found a contribution of 55,056 citable papers over the three decades ending in 2008. A rather daunting prospect for the aspirant researcher! The four main themes of the papers were Materials, Prosthetics, Orthodontics and General Dentistry.

The United States produced 12,742 papers in this period, a contribution overall of 23%. South Africa? well we managed 299, a contribution of 1%! But do not despair ...we were in the company of Denmark, Norway, Spain, South Korea, Taiwan, Greece, Belgium and India... all at the 1% contribution level! And lets be realistic... the USA boasted a population in 2008 of 304, 09 million, whilst South Africa held 48-69 million. Translate those data into dental research papers as a percentage of total population, and the USA proportion is 4%.. that in South Africa... 6%! A small victory!

The point is that out there the quantum of knowledge is burgeoning so rapidly that keeping up..an imperative of the HPCSA... is becoming rather a daydream, even for the most diligent and voracious reader. Again do not despair.. attendance at congresses offers a practical solution. Here registrants have the opportunity to rely on the leaders in the profession to deliver the goods on the developments and advances in their fields. Learning, then, is one good reason to attend congresses.

What of other considerations affecting decisions to register? The list may include Discussion with experts and colleagues; Benefiting from seeing new methods of presentation; Visiting new places and travelling; Networking nationally and internationally: Academic benefits including enhancing CV's: Reputation... proving to peers your consummate interest in the discipline.



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Other comments include Visiting the exhibitors to learn about new products and developments, and of course there is the satisfaction of gaining CPD points!

And there are many opportunities to attend... a computer site on World Dental Conferences in 2018 listed 32 International Dental Congresses, one of which (Oral Care and Dentistry) was held in Cape Town). There have already been 19 congress events in 2019, with an additional 19 yet to be held.

And of course the JOURNAL has published details of the 2019 Congress of the South African Dental Association Congress to be held in Durban, 30th August to 1st September... a marvellous panorama of contemporary Dentistry. For all those good reasons, attendance is highly recommended. But there is an additional reason which at first may appear a little irrational... and it is associated with experience.

Perhaps the wisdom of the famous may be helpful: Paulo Coelho commented, a little wryly: "People never learn by being told, they have to find out for themselves." More positively, Immanuel Kant observed "It is beyond doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience". Einstein also contributed "The only source of knowledge is experience".

I believe that a tremendous benefit of attending congresses is that the experience of registrants may be confirmed. To listen to a leading expert and to be reassured that in fact you are on the correct track.. what a comfort, what a boost!

To listen to an expert and to realise that the most recent developments can readily be incorporated into your practice, because of your experience... what an excitement! Sharing your experiences... what a pleasure!

And if this happens to be your first congress... rejoice at the thought that you will experience so many more as you take advantage of all that is on offer.

Experience with that small cavity makes the world your oyster!